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FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

*Official Records*

FIFTH COMMITTEE
3rd meeting
held on
Monday, 28 September 1992
at 3 p.m.
New York

# SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DINU (Romania)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.5/47/10; A/C.5/47/L.1)

1. The CHAIRMAN introduced document A/C.5/47/10 which contained the list of items allocated to the Fifth Committee by the General Assembly. He drew delegations' attention to the fact that the General Assembly had decided to add the item entitled "Financing of the United Nations Operation in Somalia" (item 145) to the list. In document A/C.5/47/10 the President of the General Assembly also drew attention to the recommendations concerning the organization of the session contained in section II of the report of the General Committee (A/47/250). The Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations had stressed that it was essential to make full use of the available services. With regard to the schedule of meetings the General Committee had also recommended that morning meetings should start promptly at 10 a.m.; to that end the rule that at least one quarter of the members should be present would be waived, on the understanding that that recommendation would not imply any permanent change in the relevant provisions of rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure. He intended to abide closely by those recommendations.

2. With regard to the items relating to the programme budget the General Assembly had set 1 December as the deadline for the submission of all draft decisions having financial implications; as a general rule the Committee should envisage adopting without debate the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on the financial implications of draft resolutions up to a limit of $25,000 for any one item.

3. He invited all delegations to refer to section II of document A/47/250 and to the provisions of General Assembly decision 34/401, which dealt with the rationalization of the procedures and the organization of the work of the General Assembly. Lastly, with respect to the Committee's own methods of work he proposed to adhere to the practices followed in recent years, namely: the list of speakers for each of the main agenda items would be closed 48 hours at the latest after the introduction of the item in question; speakers would be heard in the order in which they appeared on the list, and the names of speakers who were absent when due to speak would be placed at the end of the list for the same day; finally, the Rapporteur would be authorized to report directly to the General Assembly on all the items which the Committee had completed, except in a few particular cases when it might decide to include a summary of the debate in its report.

4. He took it that the Committee wished to proceed in that manner.

5. It was so decided.

6. The CHAIRMAN, turning to the tentative schedule of work, said that it had been drawn up in the light of such factors as the availability of documents and the distribution of the workload throughout the session. Document A/C.5/47/L.1 gave information about the status of the Committee's documentation.

7. The Committee would begin its substantive work on 9 October 1992. At that meeting it would hear a statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management concerning the financial crisis of the United Nations (items 106 and 107). The general debate on that issue would begin on Monday 12 October and last about a week. It was understood that the Committee might decide to revert to the issue of the financial crisis when it thought necessary. The Committee would also hear introductory statements on item 110 (Pattern of conferences).

8. The documentation on item 102 (Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors) would be ready by the end of the following week; the Committee might therefore take up the item on Tuesday 13 October. In the past few years the items concerning the review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations (item 103), the programme budget for the biennium (item 104), and programme planning (item 105) had been taken together in the general debate. He suggested that they should again be taken together at the present session and that the introductory statements should be scheduled for an early date, i.e., 16 October, or even earlier. The report of ACABQ on the administrative and budgetary coordination of the United Nations with the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (item 108) should be available by the second week in November. With regard to item 109 on the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) he suggested that JIU matters should be taken up on 13 November, by which date the corresponding ACABQ report was to be available. The JIU reports on specific issues would be considered under the items to which they related.

9. With regard to item 111 (Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations) the tentative schedule of work indicated that the report of the Committee on Contributions would be introduced on 13 October. The general debate on item 112 (Personnel questions) would begin on Friday 23 October, and on items 113 (United Nations common system) and 114 (United Nations pension system) one week later.

10. The items concerning the financing of peace-keeping and related operations were traditionally taken up towards the end of November at the earliest. In the present case he suggested that they should be taken up as the corresponding reports were issued. However, the report of the Advisory Committee on item 124 (Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peace-keeping operations) would not be available before mid-November. In view of the urgency of the situation in Somalia he suggested that the Committee should take up item 145 (Financing of the United Nations Operation in Somalia) on 19 October. Lastly, item 17 entitled "Appointments

(The Chairman)

to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments" would be taken up as early as possible during November.

11. Since the last days of the session would be extremely busy he invited delegations to do everything they could to make their statements on the various agenda items quickly. In that connection the President of the General Assembly had set 27 November as the desirable target date for the conclusion of the work of the Main Committees. The Fifth Committee might not perhaps be able to complete its programme of work by that date but it must try to do so not later than early December.

12. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) stressed the importance of item 124 (Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peace-keeping operations), the general interest aroused by it and the relationship between the financing of those operations and the Organization's financial situation, and proposed that items 124, 106 and 107 should be discussed together, on the understanding that the reports prepared by the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee would be taken into consideration at the appropriate time. He also proposed that the discussion of item 111 (Scale of assessments) should be postponed to the beginning of November. That was one of the most delicate items and it required lengthy negotiations. Experience had shown that scheduling consideration of that item for the beginning of the session would not necessarily save any time.

13. Mr. DUHALT (Mexico) thought that the tentative programme was adequate but that it would perhaps be advisable to retain the necessary flexibility for some of the matters that would have to be considered later in the session. It would be desirable to take them up as soon as the relevant documents were available in order to avoid overloading the Committee at the end of the session. From that point of view, and as Japan had proposed, it would be acceptable to advance the date for consideration of item 124 somewhat, towards mid-November. On the same grounds, however, it was hard to accept the idea of postponing the consideration of item 111 to the end of November. As far as items 106 and 107, on the Organization's financial crisis, were concerned, he would like to know whether account would need to be taken of the work of the group of eminent persons set up to consider the matter and whether the Secretariat contemplated preparing a report or a proposal in that connection for submission to the Fifth Committee during the current session.

14. Mr. LUEDIG (Estonia) asked whether it would be possible to postpone the consideration of item 111 (Scale of assessments) to the beginning of November, for two main reasons: first, his delegation had not yet seen the final report of the Committee on Contributions; and second, Estonia was currently working with IMF and the World Bank to assemble the data that would make it possible to calculate its contribution. That task, which could also be of interest to other States that had formerly been part of the Soviet Union, had not yet been completed.

15. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said that, as the Japanese delegation had pointed out, item 124 covered a number of extremely important issues. The time allocated for its consideration and the date suggested by the Chairman therefore seemed inadequate. His delegation proposed that the general debate should be brought forward and that the various reports on specific operations should be examined later when they became available. It also wished to draw attention to the most recent resolution adopted by the General Assembly on the financing of ONUSAL (resolution 46/240). In it the Assembly had decided to merge the ONUSAL and ONUCA special accounts. He suggested therefore that the consideration of items 119 and 122 should be combined and a single resolution prepared. As far as item 111 was concerned, as the Japanese representative had pointed out, the scale of assessments was traditionally a highly contentious question. Scheduling it for consideration at the beginning of the session would not necessarily mean that the matter would be settled any sooner. On the other hand, his delegation would like the Committee to proceed as speedily as possible with item 17 (Appointments). Since there would be a great many informal consultations at the end of November and the beginning of December, it would be desirable to complete the formal meetings at the earliest possible date.

16. Mrs. CLIFF (United Kingdom) said that she shared the view expressed by other delegations on the scale of assessments. It was unlikely that it would be possible to reach agreement before 13 October. Her delegation also associated itself fully with the Chairman's call to the Committee to complete its work by the beginning of December, although she felt obliged to point out that the Fifth Committee's decisions were to a certain extent dependent on the work of other Committees, in particular where programme budget implications were concerned. The General Committee had recommended 1 December as the final date for the submission of statements of financial implications to the Fifth Committee. Unfortunately, its recommendations usually remained a dead letter. Her delegation stressed, therefore, that it was important for the cut-off date to be respected. The Chairman could perhaps, assisted by the General Committee and the Secretariat, engage in consultations with the Chairmen of the other Committees towards the middle of November in order to make sure that financial implications would in fact be submitted to the Fifth Committee before 1 December.

17. Mr. ORR (Canada) said that he, too, was concerned about peace-keeping operations and in particular about the Reserve Fund. He would like the topic to be taken up as soon as possible, preferably at the beginning of October.

18. Mr. RAE (India) thought, like the Japanese delegation, that items 106, 107 and 124 should be considered together, since they concerned related matters. In that way there would be a detailed discussion of the financing of peace-keeping operations, which henceforward would be examined only every other year. He also associated himself with the Japanese and other delegations regarding the consideration of item 111. In conclusion, he hoped that, thanks to the biennialization of the programme of work, it would be possible, as the Chairman had requested, for the Committee's work to be completed as soon as possible.

19. Mr. BIRAUD (France) thanked the Chairman for recalling the rules of procedure which would make it possible to make better use of the conference-servicing resources made available to the Committee. The Committee, for its part, would need to take care to see that documents were circulated at the proper time. In that connection, the decisions adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 46/190 would make it possible to determine which units were responsible for any delays. His delegation also hoped that the Committee would be able to take full advantage of the biennialization of its programme of work. Lastly, he associated himself with the proposals of the Japanese, Estonian, United States and United Kingdom delegations regarding items 111 and 124.

20. Mr. BLUKIS (Latvia) thought that, for the new Member States, it would be best if item 111 was taken up as soon as possible, even if a decision was taken at a later date.

21. Mr. AL-MAKTARI (Yemen) asked for consideration of item 145 on the financing of the United Nations operation in Somalia to be brought forward, for humanitarian reasons.

22. Mr. RAMOS (Spain) wondered whether the documents would be issued in time for the various items to be taken up on the date envisaged in the programme of work. He hoped, although it would seem to be impossible, that the six weeks rule would be respected.

23. He associated himself with the various delegations which felt that item 124 should be considered together with items 106 and 107 so that the Committee would have more time to work out the necessary solutions. As far as item 111 was concerned, he also felt that it would be advisable to discuss it in early November, which would leave ample time for it to be studied in detail.

24. Mr. BARIMANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that he, too, thought that the consideration of item 111 should be put off to November.

25. Mr. BAUDOT (Acting Controller) said that, with respect to agenda item 124, at least three reports - those dealing with anomalies, the Support Account for Peace-keeping Operations and the rate of reimbursement to troop-contributing countries - would not be ready in time for consideration of agenda items 106 and 107. The question of the Reserve Fund for Peace-keeping Operations would, however, be raised during discussion of the latter two agenda items in mid-October. It should be noted that, while the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management would address the financing of peace-keeping operations in his introductory statement on 9 October, the Advisory Committee would not be able to complete its consideration of agenda item 124 until it had all the relevant documents.

26. With respect to agenda items 106 and 107 alone, and specifically to the group of qualified persons, an update of the financial situation and a summary of the proposals made by the Secretary-General and his predecessor would be

submitted to the Committee on the understanding that those agenda items would remain open.

27. With regard to agenda items 119 and 122, he confirmed that they would be considered at approximately the same time.

28. Mr. THORNBURGH (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management), responding to the point raised by the Mexican delegation, said that the group of qualified persons, co-chaired by Mr. Volker and Mr. Ogata, had begun its work with a view to submitting recommendations to the Secretary-General, who would then report to the Assembly. However, it was unlikely that those recommendations would be ready before 16 November, the date scheduled for the introduction of agenda item 124, and it was therefore even less likely that they would be ready in time for consideration of items 106 and 107. If they were not, the Secretary-General could submit an interim report.

29. Mr. AL-MAKTARI (Yemen), noting that the Secretariat had not taken up his proposal to move consideration of agenda item 145 forward, wondered how many thousands of Somalis would have to die before the Secretariat became aware of the urgency of the situation.

30. With respect to the documentation, he would like to know why it was issued so late. A full set of documents was not available for a single one of the Committee's 19 agenda items.

31. Mr. BAUDOT (Acting Controller) said that consideration of agenda item 145 was scheduled for mid-October. The Secretariat had decided to give priority to preparation of the documentation on the financing of the United Nations Operation in Somalia so that the Advisory Committee could discuss it on 19 October.

32. With respect to documentation, the Secretariat would make every effort to facilitate the Committee's work.

33. The CHAIRMAN said that, regarding agenda item 17, appointments would be dealt with as the candidatures were received. The Committee could already get a good idea of the vacancies to be filled in the Advisory Committee and the Committee on Contributions.

34. As to the biennialization of the Committee's programme of work, adopted in resolution 46/220, it should be borne in mind that, for various reasons, some items scheduled for odd years would have to be considered at the current session on an exceptional basis. In order to expedite matters, the other Main Committees would be asked to communicate as quickly as possible the statements of the programme budget implications of the recommendations they wished to submit to the Assembly. Similarly, the Bureau of the Committee would keep a watchful eye on the documentation.

(The Chairman)

35. Negotiations on agenda item 111 might be lengthy. However, in view of the wishes expressed by various delegations, that item would be introduced during the week of 2 November.

36. Lastly, agenda item 124 could be discussed at the same time as items 106 and 107 without waiting for all the relevant documents to be issued. If necessary, agenda item 124 could be taken up again separately at a later date.

37. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said that it would be possible to begin discussion of agenda item 124 without waiting for the three reports mentioned by the Acting Controller, as they did not deal with issues as fundamental as the Reserve Fund.

38. In addition, it would be most helpful if the Secretary of the Committee would submit the programme of work for the coming week each Thursday.

39. Mr. ACAKPO-SATCHIVI (Secretary of the Committee) said that he had already decided to adopt that practice so that the Committee could keep track of the progress of its work.

40. The CHAIRMAN informed the members of the Committee that he would be submitting shortly a revised programme of work that reflected the proposals of the various delegations, particularly with respect to the clustering of agenda items 106, 107 and 124 on the understanding that it would be possible to go back to item 124 later.

41. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.